

Greece and the Balkan Peninsula

READ TO DISCOVER

1. How did Greece develop into a modern country?
2. Why are the western Balkans politically unstable?
3. What changes are occurring in the eastern Balkans?

WHY IT MATTERS

The Balkan Peninsula is one of Europe's most volatile regions. In recent decades it has been the scene of much ethnic conflict. Use CNNfyi.com or other **current events** sources to learn about recent efforts toward peace in the region.

DEFINE

city-states
enclaves

LOCATE

Crete	Belgrade
Mount Olympus	Sarajevo
Athens	Bucharest
Kosovo	

Greece

At the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula lies Greece. The country is made up of many peninsulas, islands, and rugged mountains. The largest Greek island is Crete. The highest peak in Greece is Mount Olympus. It has an elevation of 9,570 feet (2,917 m).

History Greece was the site of one of Europe's earliest and most advanced civilizations. Civilization there can be traced back more than 2,500 years. Long ago many Greeks lived in a number of powerful **city-states**. A city-state is a self-governing city and its surrounding area. Each city was independent from the others. The people of those cities made great contributions to the arts, government, philosophy, science, and sports. Those contributions have influenced much of Europe and other places. For example, the ancient Greeks developed early systems of democratic government.

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

The Parthenon in Athens is one of the finest examples of Greek architecture. Built in the 400s B.C. as a temple to the Greek goddess Athena, the building was later used as a Christian church and as a mosque. What features of the Parthenon's architecture do you think might have influenced the design of important buildings in this century?



Over time, Greece fell under the control of outside invaders. The Persians invaded Greece but were defeated. Later, Romans and Ottoman Turks dominated Greece. It was not until 1829 that Greece became an independent country. After World War II the country slipped into a bloody civil war. A series of elected governments followed, but military leaders took over the government in 1967. In 1974 the country returned to democratic government.

People and Culture Greece's long history of foreign rule influenced its culture. These influences are particularly evident in Greek cooking. Common foods include Turkish dishes such as baklava, a honey-based pastry. However, the Greeks kept their language. In addition, about 98 percent of the population is Greek Orthodox Christian.

Many social changes are taking place in Greece today. Once poor and agricultural, Greece is becoming an industrialized country. In fact, Greece's economy is becoming more like those of northern and central Europe. With an increase in wealth, education and opportunities for women have also increased. Unlike those of earlier generations, modern Greek women seek education and jobs outside the home. In fact, women hold important positions in the country's government, private industries, and universities.

Economy, Issues, and Challenges Greece has made much economic progress since joining the EC in 1981. However, the country remains relatively poor by European standards. Still, many illegal immigrants enter Greece to fill low-paying jobs. Most are from Albania.

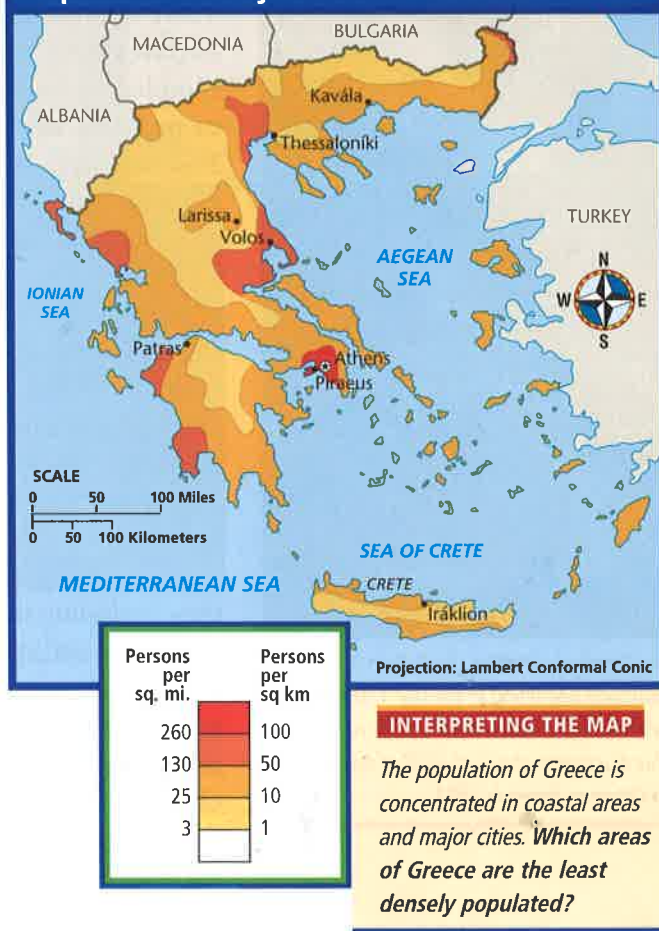
Greece's lack of population growth is much like the situation in Italy and Spain. The country is also urbanizing rapidly. Today about 30 percent of Greeks live in the capital and largest city, Athens. That city's growth has created terrible smog, traffic, and pollution. This smog and other pollution threatens the health of Greeks as well as the ancient monuments that draw tourists. As a result, the government of Athens has passed regulations designed to ease pollution problems.

✓ **READING CHECK:** **Human Systems** How has economic change in recent years affected women in Greece?

The Western Balkans

Albania and what was once Yugoslavia make up the mountainous western Balkans. Bosnia and Herzegovina (also called just Bosnia), Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia are former Yugoslav republics. Serbia and Montenegro remain united and continue to use the name *Yugoslavia*.

Population Density of Greece



INTERPRETING THE MAP

The population of Greece is concentrated in coastal areas and major cities. Which areas of Greece are the least densely populated?



The Ottomans invaded the Balkan Peninsula beginning in the late 1300s and eventually controlled much of the region. This illustration shows the fall of Belgrade to Ottoman forces in 1521.

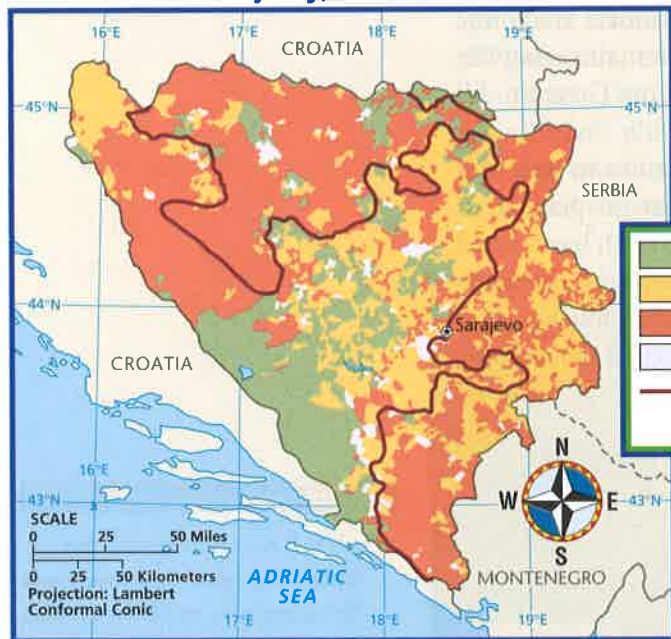
This area has one of the most diverse human populations in Europe. There one finds a complicated mix of languages and religions. Many ethnic **enclaves** have formed there. An enclave is an area that is completely surrounded by another region. So, ethnic enclaves are areas where one group of people is surrounded by one or more other ethnic groups. For example, Bosnians and Albanians are Muslims surrounded by Eastern Orthodox, Christian and Roman Catholic peoples. Those peoples include Serbs, Croats, and Macedonians.

History The Ottoman Turks, who were Muslim, invaded southern Europe in the late 1300s. They conquered most of the Balkan Peninsula. By World War I, most of the Balkans had won independence from the Ottomans. After World War I, Yugoslavia was formed to unite the various Slavic peoples who lived in the area. These peoples included the Bosnians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes. A monarchy governed and held the country together. Albania, which had claimed independence in 1912, remained separate. However, many Albanian people had moved to neighboring countries, including the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union occupied all of the Balkan countries but Greece. The occupied countries became communist. Yugoslavia's government was led by the dictator Tito. He kept the country united until his death in 1980. Ten years later communism crumbled in Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia then began to split apart. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991 and fighting soon broke out among Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Areas of Ethnic Majority, 1991



Areas of Ethnic Control, 1995



INTERPRETING THE MAP Before the war in Bosnia the region's major ethnic groups were intermixed (left). After the war, however, the country's ethnic map had changed dramatically (right). In 1995 the Dayton Accord established a line between a Serbian-controlled area and

an area controlled by Croats and Muslims. How has conflict influenced the control of different regions in the country? How might these areas of control have influenced the creation of the Dayton Accord line?



The city of Mostar was heavily damaged during the war in Bosnia. Before the war, the city's population included many Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. However, today there are no Serbs in the city, and the Croat and Muslim populations are geographically and politically divided.

The fighting was brief in Slovenia, which borders Austria, Hungary, and Italy. However, fighting in Croatia slid into bloody civil war. Serbia sent weapons and supplies to the Serb rebels in Croatia. When Bosnia declared independence in 1992, civil war broke out there too. Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats all fought to control the country or parts of it.

Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia refused to accept separation from the rest of Yugoslavia. They did not want to live in countries controlled by people of other ethnic groups. The government in Serbia supported them. However, when the terrible fighting ended in late 1995, Croatia and Bosnia had won independence. Keeping the peace has not been easy.

In 1997 periodic fighting between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo got much worse. Tensions between the mostly Muslim Albanians and Christian Orthodox Serbs stretch back centuries. The United States and its NATO allies intervened to stop the fighting in 1999. Kosovo's future is still uncertain.

During the war in Kosovo, many ethnic Albanians fled to Albania. These refugees were forced to leave for their own safety. The resulting population increase further strained the limited resources of Albania, Europe's poorest country. Today Albania continues to adjust from a long period of isolation under its old Communist government. That government lost power after elections in 1992.

People and Culture As you can see, culture in the western Balkans is a complex mix of religions, ethnic backgrounds, and political views. For example, the Serbs and Macedonians are Slavic. They practice an Orthodox Christian religion. The Croats are also Slavic, but most are Roman Catholic. Most Albanians are Muslim. All of these peoples wish to preserve their particular heritage.

Belgrade is the largest city in the region. It and Sarajevo (sar-uh-YAY-voh)—the once beautiful capital of Bosnia—have been heavily damaged by war. Many cities and towns across the region must be rebuilt. Also, many people who fled Croatia and Bosnia during the fighting want to return to their old homes. However, it is not clear whether this will be possible.

Economy, Issues, and Challenges Slovenia has rapidly built up trade with the EU. It has also attracted foreign businesses and tourists. Coal, oil, minerals, and an electronics industry support its growing economy. The country also promotes tourism, which it hopes to develop further. However, other countries in the area have had major problems. War, corruption, and a lack of modernized industries have left them with weak economies.

Continuing unrest makes this area's economic future uncertain. The United States and other NATO countries have peacekeeping troops there. Recent government changes in Yugoslavia may also help. Many observers hope the new government will focus on solving economic problems and calming ethnic tensions.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* What characterizes the cultural geography of the western Balkans?

The Eastern Balkans

Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova lie in the eastern Balkans. Those countries have not experienced the ethnic fighting seen in the western Balkans. Therefore, they are more politically stable than their neighbors. However, as in other formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe, economies are underdeveloped, and standards of living are lower than in other regions of Europe.

History and Culture The countries of the eastern Balkans have been controlled by the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires. The region gained independence from the weakened Ottoman Empire during the late 1800s and early 1900s. After World War II the area came under the control of the Soviet Union. Communist control ended in the early 1990s.

Bulgarians are a Slavic people and share some culture traits with other Slavs. Like Russians, for example, Bulgarians use the Cyrillic alphabet. Most people in Bulgaria follow the Bulgarian Orthodox religion. In Romania about 7 percent of the population is ethnic Hungarian, but the majority is ethnic Romanian. They speak a language derived from Latin. Most Romanians follow the Romanian Orthodox religion. Most of Moldova's people are closely related to Romanians and are Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Many people in Romania live in rural areas and suffer from a lack of access to modern technology. In fact, nearly half of the country's population is rural. In general, farmers work their fields without the help of modern farm machinery. Also, there is a lack of many consumer goods, which means that people rely on homemade goods for some of their needs.





Economy, Issues, and Challenges The collapse of communism brought great changes to the eastern Balkans. Moldova, Bulgaria, and Romania are now working to adjust to democracy and a free-market economy. Moldova is a small densely populated country with rich soils and a mild climate. The struggling economy is based on producing fruit, grains, and wine. About one fourth of Bulgaria's labor force works in agriculture. However, the government has made efforts to attract modern industries. Romania is trying to expand an economy based on agriculture, oil, coal, and low-technology industries. Bucharest is the country's capital and major industrial center.

Most people in the eastern Balkans have living standards well below those of other Europeans. Many people of these countries lack health care and safe water, particularly in the villages. A lack of housing in urban areas is also a problem. Many people are leaving to find work in other countries. As a result, Bulgaria's population is decreasing.

READING CHECK: Human Systems How have the economies and politics of the eastern Balkans changed in recent years?

INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

The huge Danube River delta in Romania has many strips of land called grinduri that farmers use to grow crops. Reeds that grow in the region's shallow waters are also used to make paper and fibers for textiles. What challenges might farmers in this region face?



Review

Define
city-states
enclaves

Working with Sketch Maps On the map that you created in Section 2, label Greece, the Balkan countries, Crete, Mount Olympus, Athens, Kosovo, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Bucharest. In the margin of your map, identify the capital of Greece.

Reading for the Main Idea

- Human Systems** How did ancient Greece contribute to modern government?
- Places and Regions** How has cultural conflict shaped the political boundaries of the western Balkans?
- Human Systems** How are the economies of the eastern Balkan countries changing?

Critical Thinking

- Identifying Points of View** Why do you think ethnic Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina opposed independence from Yugoslavia? Why do you think Croats and Bosnians may have wanted independence even at the risk of war?



Organizing What You Know

- Copy the flowchart below and use it to trace events in Yugoslavia since the death of Tito in 1980.

